

Washington, DC - With the support of 12th District Georgia Congressman John Barrow (D-Savannah), the U.S. House of Representatives today took an important step forward in strengthening the nation's local police and sheriff departments -- boosting funding for the successful COPS Program in an effort to add an additional 50,000 new officers on the streets over the next six years.

"As a former county commissioner, I know that effective crime control depends on giving our sheriffs and police chiefs the resources, the officers, and the flexibility they need to respond to the specific needs of their community," Barrow said today after voting in support of the bill. "Cracking down on crime doesn't work if you force a one-size-fits-all approach. Every community is different and the COPS Program was designed with that fact in mind."

Since 1994, \$15,767,842 in COPS grants have been awarded to law enforcement agencies in Georgia's 12th Congressional District. If today's legislation, the COPS Improvement Act of 2007 (H.R. 1700), passes into law, it is estimated that an additional \$4,810,528 will likely flow into the District.

According to the study by the Government Accountability Office, COPS hiring grants were responsible for reducing crimes by about 200,000 to 225,000 crimes between 1998 and 2000 -- one third of which were violent. Even though the COPS program has been credited with helping significantly reduce crime rates during the mid to late 1990's, previous Congresses have consistently cut funding for COPS hiring grants -- reducing them by more than \$1 billion a year in the late 1990s to just \$198 million in 2003, and then to only \$10 million in 2005.

Endorsed by both the National Association of Police Organizations and the National Sheriffs' Association, today's legislation renews Congress's commitment to the COPS program by authorizing \$600 million a year for COPS hiring grants. In addition, the bill includes \$350 million for local police departments to upgrade their technology, as well as \$200 million or to help hire additional community prosecutors.

"Everyone has a right to feel safe in their neighborhood and in their community," Barrow said. "This bill recognizes the valuable role that the police play in protecting that right by giving them the help they need."

The Senate still has to act on its version of the bill, S.368. After the House and Senate have both agreed to similar versions of the bill, it will go to the President for his signature.

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